

For Immediate Release

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*Washington, D.C.* – Today, Congressman Sires demanded further action by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ensure a safer airspace over the Hudson River.

“Though I’m encouraged to see FAA making critical safety changes for aircraft flying over the Hudson River in today’s New York Airspace Task Force Recommendations, it saddens me that there has to be a tragedy of this nature to get FAA to take action,” said Congressman Sires.

The New York Airspace Task Force recently released recommendations for the Hudson River, including dividing the airspace into distinct corridors to separate aircraft flying over the river from those operating local helicopters. The changes also include new pilot operating practices, which require pilots to use specific radio frequencies, turn on anti-collision devices, and report their aircraft information when entering the Hudson River area. The New York Airspace Task Force did not include all of the recommendations made in previous reports by the Department of Transportation (DOT), the FAA Advisory Committee, and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

“While these new modifications to the airspace may help prevent further tragedy and are a step in the right direction, the FAA must do more to increase safety. I recently sent a letter to FAA insisting that they take immediate action to implement all of the recommendations from DOT, the Advisory Committee, and NTSB. At a minimum, FAA must require the tracking of aircraft below 1100 feet, the installation of collision avoidance systems and the use of transponders to identify an aircraft’s location.”

The New York Airspace Task Force included a recommendation that helicopters over the Hudson River fly below 1000 feet. In the past, the number of sightseeing helicopters has exceeded 20,000 a year.

“Having helicopters fly at lower altitudes creates a constant noise nuisance for those in New Jersey living along the Hudson River. FAA’s recommendation for helicopters is simply trading one problem for another instead of finding a safe, effective solution.”

Congressman Sires will be participating in a hearing later this month to ensure that FAA is taking the steps necessary to improve the airspace congestion over the Hudson River.

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